



Testimony to the Appropriations Committee

In Support of the Governor's Budget Recommendations Related to the

**Department of Housing
and the
Department of Economic and Community Development**

**Contained in
House Bill 5037, An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2023**

Submitted by Mag Morelli, President of LeadingAge Connecticut

February 16, 2022

LeadingAge Connecticut, a membership association representing over 130 not-for-profit organizations serving older adults across the continuum of care, services, supports and housing. Our membership includes not-for-profit providers of affordable senior housing, all of whom are committed to providing quality housing and services to their residents. We are pleased to submit testimony in support of the Governor's proposed budget recommendations related to affordable senior housing within the Department of Housing and workforce development within the Department of Economic and Community Development.

Department of Housing

LeadingAge Connecticut is a strong proponent of linking affordable senior housing with long term services and supports; a model that enables older adults to remain in the community where they can thrive as they age. We believe that this model is one of the answers to our state's quest to balance the system of long-term services and supports because it can provide an array of services to seniors residing in an affordable housing community while also often preventing or delaying nursing home placement.

Our state-financed congregate rental housing for the elderly sites have served as a terrific affordable housing setting for this model; where services can be provided to the residents through the CT Home Care Program for Elders. **We strongly support the \$2 million in additional funding that will support the full estimated annual cost of the Congregate Facilities Operating Subsidy Program in the General Fund** and which will provide stability to this affordable housing program.

We are proud of the fact that Connecticut has developed several nationally acclaimed models of senior housing plus services, but we are in need of more units to meet the growing needs of our elderly population. Anecdotally it is clear that we are victims of our own success. The model of

providing services and supports within affordable senior housing settings is allowing older adults to age in place and remain in their units much longer than our previous experience. This success means that fewer units open up and the waiting lists continue to grow. As a result, we need to invest in building more units of affordable senior housing with rental subsidies to meet this growing need. And while the **additional \$50 million in ARPA funding for affordable housing initiatives across the state** is not specifically targeted toward elderly housing, we support all investment in affordable housing and hope this additional investment will influence an expansion of elderly housing units so that older adults can be afforded the opportunity to remain in the towns and cities that they have lived in or to be near the families that they love.

Department of Economic and Community Development

Addressing the workforce crisis in aging services is a priority issue for LeadingAge Connecticut. Nursing homes, home health care agencies, assisted living services agencies, and other aging service providers are struggling to maintain healthy staffing levels and many have been forced to limit admissions due to staffing challenges.

There is no one program or one idea that is going to fix this problem. Our state needs a multifaceted plan to respond to this crisis and **CareerConneCT is one very valuable program to keep within that plan.** The concept of focusing on short term training programs that can provide job placement across several sectors of the health care field is beneficial to both the health care employers and the individuals seeking job opportunities within the field. Interested and eager job seekers can begin their careers through affordable and supportive training programs. The demand is there and we welcome the recommended additional support for CareerConneCT.

Thank you for your consideration of this submitted testimony.

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